

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 18, 19 and 21-31 are pending in the application.

In the Final Office Action of April 24, 2006 (the "Final Office Action"):

1. Claims 18, 19, 21, 22, 30 and 31 are rejected under 35 USC 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. 6,726,699 issued to Wright et al. ("Wright");
2. Claims 23 and 24 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wright in view of U.S. 6,224,608 issued to Ciccolella et al. ("Ciccolella"); and
3. Claims 23 and 25-29 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wright in view of U.S. 4,655,752 issued to Honkanen et al. ("Honkanen").

The Final Office Action asserts that an unidentified structure (i.e., lacking a reference number or description) in FIG. 1 of Wright is an "engaging formation on a robotic arm" in rejecting Claim 18. However, since there is no description of this structure in Wright, it is unclear what its function is, and whether it is even a part of the robotic arm.

After reviewing the description of FIG. 1, it appears that this structure is more likely a mechanism that facilitates removably coupling the instrument 12 to a tool driver 20.

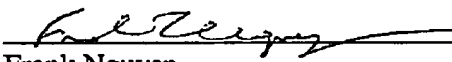
Such a coupling mechanism is clearly required as part of the robotic surgical system of Wright. See, Col. 2, lines 25-30. Since such a coupling mechanism is required by Wright, the structure identified in FIG. 1 must be that coupling mechanism, because there is nothing else shown in FIG. 1 that could perform the function. Further, the mechanism may be a spring-loaded or threaded mechanism that is part of the surgical instrument 12. There is nothing to indicate that it is part of the robotic arm (assuming the tool driver 20 is part of the robotic arm 16, which arguably, it may not be).

Further, there is nothing in Wright even suggesting a need for a "complementary engaging formation on a robotic arm". Therefore, the Final Office Action not only assumes that the unidentified structure in FIG. 1 performs such a function, it further assumes, using hindsight reasoning, that such a function is even present in Wright.

Since all rejections of the pending claims are based on the rejection of Claim 18, applicants respectfully request that the rejection of all pending claims be reconsidered in light of the above.

Respectfully submitted,

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